

For discussion
on 14.5.2001

LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

**Stage II Study on Review of Metroplan
And the Related Kowloon Density Study Review**

***Second Stage Public Consultation –
Opportunities and Constraints and Main Themes for Metroplan***

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this paper is to :
 - (a) present an overview of the key findings of the assessments of constraints on and opportunities for development and possible planning changes in land use in the Metro Area, and the initial review of the Kowloon Density Study (KDS); and
 - (b) seek Members' comments on the main themes for the Metroplan strategic framework to be used as a basis for the formulation of development options.

BACKGROUND

2. The purpose of the Stage II Study on Review of Metroplan and the Related KDS Review (the Study) is to formulate an up-to-date development strategy for the Metro Area for the period up to 2016 and beyond. More specifically, it includes a review of the current density controls in Kowloon imposed under the KDS 1993 by assessing the impacts of plot ratio (PR) relaxation in Kowloon, that is, the KDS Review.
3. Detailed analysis of the existing and planned infrastructure and provision of Government/Institution/Community (GIC) facilities has been conducted in relation to the planned population growth in Kowloon, as the part of work relating to KDS Review. In parallel, the Study also examined the constraints and opportunities for development in the whole Metro Area and identified main themes for future development.
4. Public consultation for the Study is organized in three stages. The first stage was conducted between July and September 1999. The main comments were the need for an environment-friendly and convenient city, to strengthen harbour

protection and expedite urban renewal. These views have been incorporated in the on-going work of the Study. The second stage public consultation on the constraints, opportunities and the main themes is now being carried out. The Consultation Digest is at Annex A.

BASIS OF ASSESSMENT

Projected Population and Employment Levels

5. On the basis of the PR controls under the existing Outline Zoning Plans (OZPs) in the Metro Area, population and employment of 2016 are projected based on new developments and redevelopments.
6. The total population of Metro Area is projected to increase from 4.3m in 1999 to 4.9m in 2016. While the population on Hong Kong Island will remain almost unchanged, i.e. about 1.4m, the population in Kowloon will increase from 2.11m (50% of Metro total) in 1999 to 2.65m (54% of Metro total) in 2016.
7. The total employment in Metro area is anticipated to increase from 2.58m in 1999 to 3.01m in 2016, with the increase mainly on Hong Kong Island. As the Metro Area will continue to experience a much higher employment to population ratio, a significant number of commuting trips will be attracted to the Metro Area from the New Territories, in particular to Hong Kong Island.
8. Based on the population and employment projections, assessments on infrastructure and environment have been conducted.

INFRASTRUCTURE CONSTRAINTS

Transport Capacities

9. Traffic assessment indicated that, by 2016, there could be congestion at some strategic roads and the problems will be particularly serious in cross harbour links. Widespread congestion is also anticipated in local networks and junctions, which are difficult to resolve in the built-up areas. Rail networks will generally function adequately, but a few rail links could reach or marginally exceed the design capacity.

Sewerage Assessment

10. The sewerage assessment revealed that there could be capacity constraints in the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme (HATS, formerly known as Strategic Sewage Disposal Scheme (SSDS)) Stage I system, in particular in East and Central Kowloon. The Stage III/IV works which could help relieve the capacity constraint of Stage I is subject to further review and it is unlikely that the capacity

problem could be resolved in the short to medium terms.

Environmental Considerations

11. Road traffic noise is a problem in Metro Area. In 1997, about 285,000 population in Metro Area were affected by excessive road traffic noise and in 2016, there will be 192,000. Despite the slight improvement, traffic noise levels in such districts as Kowloon City, Kwun Tong, Wong Tai Sin, Yau Tsim Mong, Tsuen Wan and Kwai Tsing could still exceed the standards of HKPSG in 2016.
12. The Air Quality Objectives (AQO) in Kowloon according to the strategic environmental assessment in CTS-3, were already breached at most Air Quality Monitoring Stations (AQMS) in 1997 and non-compliance with the AQO will continue.

Open Space and GIC Assessment

13. Whilst additional facilities have been planned for 2016 to meet most of the current shortfalls, there will be shortfalls in hospital bed provision, educational facilities, facilities for the elderly, large-scale leisure facilities and local open spaces, etc in many districts in the Metro Area.

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

14. The following development opportunities has been identified in the context of “land-based areas” :
 - New land area
 - Urban renewal
 - Plot ratio relaxation
 - Rezoning

New Land Areas

15. Nearly 50% of the land area in the Metro Area has been designated for country park and natural countryside. As most of the remaining area have already been developed, it is almost impossible to identify large new land-based area for major development in the Metro Area. Notwithstanding, there are possibilities of identifying suitable sites for small-scale development, in particular for high quality housing in Hong Kong South.
16. Though uncommon in Hong Kong, underground spaces may offer some opportunities for development. In view of the scarce land resources, underground retail floorspace with pedestrian connections and underground car parks beneath open spaces are opportunities worth considering.

Urban Renewal

17. According to Government's urban renewal programme under the Urban Renewal Strategy (URS), 200 urban redevelopment projects and 25 uncompleted projects of the Land Development Corporation are to be implemented within the Metro Area in the next 20 years.
18. Public housing estates which are ripe for redevelopment represent the last large tract of urban land under single ownership and have great potential for comprehensive development. More recently, studies to examine the potential of restructuring 4 districts in need of renewal in the long term were launched. The role of Metroplan in the urban renewal context would focus on the overall development framework addressing the interface issues between the old and new areas and strengthening the district identity.

Plot Ratio Relaxation

19. To allow a higher PR would provide greater incentive for re-development, and assist restructuring of old areas provided development level could be sustained by the infrastructure and GIC provision. Opportunities of PR relaxation have been examined in areas where the PR are below the maximum level permissible under the B(P)R. The situation within Metro Area is as follows :

(a) Hong Kong Island –

There is already no statutory plot ratio control in most of the developable areas along the northern shore and development up to the maximum B(P)R level is permissible. Other areas, such as Mid-levels, Island South etc, are subject to severe infrastructure capacity constraints, and/or having special characteristics that render a higher PR inappropriate. In short, the scope of PR relaxation is very limited on Hong Kong Island.

(b) Kowloon –

Currently, the PR in Kowloon are restricted to levels below the maximum permissible by B(P)R. Even based on the currently planned level, the population in 2016 is projected to be 2.65m, i.e. 0.54m increase compared with 2.11m in 1999. The initial KDS Review recommends no blanket PR relaxation and to maintain the current level of PR restrictions at this stage, in view of the infrastructure capacity constraints (paragraphs 9-13 above) and deficiency in GIC provision and open space. Notwithstanding, there may be scope for minor relaxation in areas capable of achieving large-scale comprehensive redevelopment, public and private, provided that such redevelopment could be sustained by the planned infrastructure and could address the deficiency of GIC provision in the neighbourhood.

(c) Tsuen Wan/Kwai Tsing –

- (i) At present, domestic and non-domestic PR in Tsuen Wan/Kwai Tsing are restricted to 5 and 9.5 respectively through non-statutory planning measures. However, there may not be much spare traffic capacities for PR increase in Tsuen Wan/Kwai Tsing, and there are also capacity problems in the sewage treatment facilities. A higher development intensity in the areas, which exceeds the administrative control, is therefore not recommended at this stage.
- (ii) However, as part of Tsuen Wan Town Centre has been earmarked for an urban renewal target area under the URS, minor relaxation of PR may be considered for comprehensive redevelopment, aiming to take forward the URS and to address the population/employment imbalance in the Territory. Detailed study on land use changes would be conducted at the next stage of work, i.e. option generation and evaluation.

Rezoning

20. Large-scale, en-bloc rezoning exercises may be desirable to reflect changes in demand for different types of property in the market, to bring about renewal and to improve land use arrangements. The Study has examined the following types of rezoning at strategic level to meet Metroplan objectives :

Rezoning of “Industrial” land

21. Due to economy restructuring and the resultant surplus of industrial land, 216 ha have been identified by the Planning Department for rezoning to “Commercial” (“C”), “Business”, “Residential” (“R”), “Comprehensive Development Area” (“CDA”) etc. A broad rezoning proposal for surplus industrial area in Metro Area such as Kwun Tong, San Po Kong, Cheung Sha Wan , Tai Kok Tsui and Tsuen Wan has been formulated. These proposed changes would be taken into account in the option generation and infrastructure testing in the next stage of work.

Rezoning of “Commercial/Residential” (“C/R”) zones

22. The population and job imbalance between NT and the Metro Area has already placed heavy burden on the strategic transport network, in particular the cross harbour links. The current “C/R” zone, which allows either commercial or residential or mixed use building, would lead to uncertainty in planning for infrastructure and GIC provision. Rezoning “C/R” zones specifically to either “C” or “R” would provide certainty in planning of infrastructure and GIC facilities,

help redistribute population and jobs, hence improving the efficiency of transport infrastructure.

23. In this respect, it is proposed to split the “C/R” zoning in Hong Kong Island by providing more residential use and in Tsuen Wan/Kwai Tsing by providing more employment so as not to overload the transport facilities to Kowloon south and Hong Kong Island for work.

Rezoning of other zones

24. Under-utilized sites zoned for “Government, Institution or Community” (“G/IC”) and “Other Specified Uses” (“OU”) also offer good potential for redevelopment. We would constantly review such “G/IC” sites for rezoning into other purposes. Opportunities for alternative uses include existing service reservoir sites, which could be considered as land bank upon resolving imminent infrastructural problems.

Potential Business Nodes

25. Development of employment nodes in the periphery of Kowloon and in Tsuen Wan with rail accessibility could help to reduce commuting flows to the office centres on Hong Kong Island. Areas considered suitable for business and office employment, including Tsuen Wan, Lai Chi Kok, San Po Kong, Kwun Tong and Quarry Bay, have been examined based on criteria including strategic location, business use opportunity, rail availability and connectivity, strategic highway accessibility, associated high-tech links, availability of nearby high quality housing.
26. In the last 10 years, Kowloon Tong has changed in character to a rather mixed use area with kindergarten, nursing homes and hotels. In view of its close proximity to a wide range of educational and vocational institutions, and good accessibility, the area is considered having potential as a business/high-tech node and this would be examined in greater detail in the next stage of work.

MAIN THEMES FOR METROPLAN

27. Based on the findings of infrastructure constraints and development opportunities in the Metro Area, main themes for Metroplan have been prepared as a basis for formulating development options in the next stage of the Study. These themes are also summarized in the following sections. The proposed approaches to achieving these themes are detailed in the Consultation Digest.

Sustainable Development

28. Development should be maintained within the limits posed by the capacity of transport and sewerage systems, the environment and social infrastructure.

Employment Redistribution

29. The job/population imbalance between Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and New Territories should be improved to reduce commuter traffic. Better integration of land use and transport planning could improve efficiency of transport infrastructure.

Urban Renewal and District Restructuring

30. In addition to replacing obsolete buildings by new stocks, the land use arrangement and layout of streets in older areas should be improved and district identity be strengthened.

Environment Friendly and Convenience

31. Provision should be made for efficient movement of people and goods, while reducing road congestion, air pollution, traffic noise and intrusion of transport infrastructure.

Tourism and Recreation Development

32. The role of Metro area as a resource for promoting tourism and meeting local recreation needs should be enhanced.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

33. A Consultation Digest setting out the development opportunities and main planning themes for the Metro Area is at Annex A. A joint public consultation with the Harbour Plan Study was started in March 2001 with a joint public forum already held on 31.3.2001.
34. Apart from presentation to Members, other public bodies that have been/will be consulted include Town Planning Board, District Councils of Metro Area, Planning Sub-committee of Land and Building Advisory Committee, Long Term Housing Strategy Advisory Committee, Strategic Planning Committee, Provisional Local Vessel Advisory Committee, Port Operations Committee etc. The whole exercise is expected to last until end May 2001.

NEXT STAGE OF WORK

35. Views obtained from this round of consultation would be included in the generation and evaluation of development options for the Metro Area as the next

stage of work. As the KDS Review and the Harbour Plan Study would provide essential inputs to the Metroplan Review, the recommendations of these two studies would also be incorporated in the Metroplan Review for the formulation of an overall strategic framework.

ADVICE SOUGHT

36. Members are invited to comment on the development opportunities and main planning themes as summarized in the Consultation Digest.

ATTACHMENT

Annex A Stage II Study on Review of Metroplan - Consultation Digest

PLANNING DEPARTMENT
May 2001